

## Jamaican practicum enhances ECE careers

For most people going to Jamaica in January means relaxing at a beach resort. But for a group of George Brown Early Childhood Education (ECE) students, relaxation isn't a big part of their trip there. They're too busy teaching large classes of 3 to 5-year-olds – honing their professional skills after almost a year of preparation and study.

Student Emily Snow was one of 16 students who spent a month working at a school in a suburb of Kingston, Jamaica in January this year. She loved the affectionate and energetic children she worked with and the opportunity to learn. "We are immersed into a whole new environment and different styles of teacher practices," she said after two weeks at the school. "The teachers are very open to learning from us just as much as we are anxious to learn from them."

ECE professor and Jamaica project co-ordinator Lynn Wilson says the international practicum experience puts the skills of the students to the test. "The most challenging experience for the students is the high pupil/teacher ratio. For example, some students may be placed in a room with 30 children. Our ratios would be one to eight so you can see how this is a huge learning curve for them."

The practicum is a life and career-changing experience for many of the 112 students who have gone since 2003, says Wilson.

"Many students have gone on to work in the international community – Thailand, China, Mexico, Hungary, Tanzania – to continue their work in early childhood education. Others, who work in Toronto, develop sensitivity and a deeper understanding of Caribbean child rearing practices which allows them to work more effectively with children and their families."

In Jamaica students stay in residence at the college's partner institution – Shortwood Teachers' College – for half their time and the balance at a home-stay with a Jamaican family.

The students are chosen in May for the following January and spend a lot of time getting ready – attending a special course and 7-week field seminar as well as fund-raising. This year the students not only raised enough money to cover their some of

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Early Childhood Education student Ashley Larabee was one of 16 students to spend January teaching at a pre-school in a suburb of Kingston, Jamaica. "This is me and my friend Raekwan. He is five years old, and he loves to "rock on" with me with the drum set we've made!," she says. The international practicum allows students to hone their skills – and opens new career directions for them.

## An interview with our new campus architects

*Bruce Kuwabara, partner in Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects and design principal for George Brown's new waterfront campus, and Michael Moxam, partner in Stantec Architecture, are leading the Stantec/KPMB team that will design the new campus.*

**What attracted you to the George Brown waterfront campus project? That is, what do you see and the interesting challenges and/or opportunities presented by the project?**

**BRUCE KUWABARA:** One of the key things that attracted the Joint Venture team of Stantec Architecture/ Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg is that the project is as much about creating a vibrant academic community for GBC as it is about city building. George Brown's bold vision to integrate health care education with residential and recreational facilities on a prominent site in the emerging East Bayfront

precinct presents stimulating imaginative challenge on many levels.

It has all the elements to achieve architectural excellence – great client, great site, great program. We are inspired by the combined goals of George Brown College and Waterfront Toronto which are very high in terms of design excellence, connectivity, sustainability and community process.

**MICHAEL MOXAM:** The success of Toronto's Waterfront Development will depend on the energy and vitality generated at the ground plane, connecting it to the City, the landscape and the Lake. This vitality will be created through the vibrancy and diversity of the uses and programs engaged. The Integrated Student Residence and Recreation Centre and the Health Science Building provides just the kind of life and

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energy that will make the Waterfront come alive. This is one of the key opportunities that attracted us to this project. The Academic Ground Plane of the GBC waterfront campus should be a natural extension of Sherbourne Park to the East, The City to the North and The Lake to the south creating the perfect medium for student life to thrive.

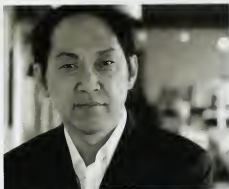
**BRUCE KUWABARA:** The challenges are to ensure that the vision and design excellence for George Brown College is achieved through the Design Build Finance Manage (DBFM) process. The creative and functional design needs of George Brown College will be specified in output specifications and expressed through a design exemplar that will achieve all the necessary approvals from the Waterfront Toronto, the City and the surrounding communities.

**The campus buildings will be part of the city skyline – seen from the harbour and island – what impact will this have on the design?**

**MICHAEL MOXAM:** The skyline of the city will change dramatically with the development of the East Bay Front. A waterfront academic campus as a piece of this development is remarkably unique and brings with it the opportunity to create an iconic architectural expression capturing the energy of "Academic Life"

**BRUCE KUWABARA:** The form and massing will be directly inspired by the highly visible location, creating signature and legibility for GBC when seen from the Harbour, the Islands, and Lake Ontario Park as well as from ferries, water craft and airplanes. The site and innovative hybrid program of teaching, residential and recreational demands an integrated vertical campus concept comprising vibrant neighborhoods of learning, living, recreation within a vertical composition.

**How many people in your firm do you expect will work on this project?**



Architects Bruce Kuwabara (top) and Michael Moxam

**Bruce Kuwabara:** The joint venture of Stantec Architecture and KPMB has dedicated a core team of 6 senior staff who worked successfully together in a similar model on Bridgepoint Health. In addition to Michael Moxam, the project director, and myself, we have Stuart Elgie and Stephen Philips from Stantec and Mitchell Hall and Judy Taylor for KPMB.

**MICHAEL MOXAM:** Stantec Architecture/KPMB will likely have 12-15 staff employed on the project at peak times. The full consulting team of programming, engineering and specialist consultants will engage between 25 and 30 staff.

the Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. Denis Kingsley, all 3,000 early childhood institutions in Jamaica will receive a copy of this document."

The exchange goes both ways. In February, six students and two professors from Jamaica's Shortwood Teachers' College spent time in George Brown Lab schools, as well two other Jamaican teachers came to Toronto to study programs for children with special needs. "Since 2003 when the project began, we have had 50 Jamaican colleagues come to Toronto along with 26 Shortwood students," says Wilson. The ECE department also offers graduates practicum experiences and job opportunities at a newly developed George Brown Lab School in China.

For more information on the Jamaica project go to: <http://www.georgebrown.ca/earlychildhood/jamaica/index.aspx>

**As chair of the design review panel for waterfront Toronto – what are you looking for in the buildings in this area?**

**BRUCE KUWABARA:** As chair of the waterfront design review panel, I am looking for architecture that is actively engaged in creating vibrancy and a strong sense of place on the waterfront. The GBC building should be a waterfront building that has an animated ground plane, achieves Gold LEED standards, and is an exemplar of how architecture can reinforce the urban goals of a larger precinct. The design panel is most interested in how individual buildings contribute to the precinct plan, and how each building engages and supports the public realm. The keys to success for GBC will be how the building addresses Queen's Quay, and takes full advantage of its adjacency to Sherbourne Park and the Water's Edge.

**What makes a successful college/university campus in your view? Which campuses (anywhere) do you appreciate/admire, and why?**

**BRUCE KUWABARA:** Successful campuses have a heart, integrated edges, and a system of connected spaces that privilege pedestrians over automobiles. Great historic campuses like McGill or Yale are also enriched by great architecture. But George Brown College has developed an innovative and distinctive brand: a truly urban college distributed among various neighbourhoods, it engages the diversity that characterizes Toronto. Rather than emulating traditional universities and colleges, George Brown has forged an alternative model for academic institutions, one that is bold, entrepreneurial and flexible to respond to the increasingly rapid change that has become a 21st century standard.

For example, George Brown's partnership with Souleppier Theatre at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts combines academic and professional training as an anchor within the Distillery District. Its heart is the Lobby/Atrium – where students and actors and the public can converge daily and nightly. This project received a Business Week/Architectural Record award for developing a hybrid teaching/performance model.

The key for George Brown's Lakefront Campus will be to give it a 'heart' – we imagine this 'heart' will be a continuous public realm of spaces of movement and informal spaces that invite gathering and interaction and pull together the diverse program into a cohesive whole.

**MICHAEL MOXAM:** A great campus is intimately connected to its urban context elevating the academic experience beyond the environment of the institution to one that embraces the larger context, and enriches both the institution and the city. George Brown has displayed this understanding and commitment through its multiple locations. We will build on this tradition with an innovative, exciting design for the Integrated Student Residence and Recreation Centre and the Health Sciences Building on Toronto's waterfront.

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their own costs but brought with them and donated a record \$9,000 worth of materials for teachers and children along with over \$2,000 worth of children's books.

The practicum is only one part of an extensive connection between ECE at George Brown and Jamaica, says Wilson. "We have been honoured to be involved with the Jamaican Early Childhood Commission and the Ministry of Education in the development of a national curriculum along with new Standards and Regulations. We have participated in the development of a Best Practice document which is a self reflection tool for early childhood practitioners and ECE students. With funding from

# Grad Percy Lezard overcame obstacles to teach, help others

Percy Lezard has already overcome a lifetime of challenges to achieve her dream of teaching and helping other First Nations people. The 2004 George Brown Human Services Counsellor program graduate is now a part-time professor at George Brown and Ryerson University while at the same time completing her doctorate and both working and volunteering in Toronto's First Nations community.

An Okanagan Nation Member from the Penticton Indian Band Reserve in B.C., Lezard always knew she was different while growing up on the reserve. She was in and out of the child welfare system, has bilateral hearing loss and a number of assessed and not-as-yet identified learning disabilities as well as an autoimmune condition. As a lesbian or "two spirited" woman, she was also different from many. But a belief in herself and a desire to succeed helped, Lezard says. "Every time someone told me I couldn't do something, I proved them wrong and did it."

Lezard moved to Toronto in 1998 and enrolled in George Brown's American Sign Language interpreter program shortly after. Although she didn't know it, Lezard was functionally illiterate. Hard-of-hearing, with a Deaf brother, Lezard had grown up signing, so she was surprised when she failed her first assignment. It was a George Brown instructor who suggested she might have learning disabilities and arranged to have her assessed. Lezard said the results were both shocking and reassuring. "I learned I had these learning disabilities, dyslexia, for one. Once I learned how to read and write, I started reading a book a day."

She credits George Brown for identifying her learning disabilities, helping her learn to read and write, and setting her on an impressive academic path that includes a college diploma, two university degrees and a doctorate in progress.

Switching into the Human Services Counsellor program at George Brown (now replaced by the Social Service Worker program) Lezard learned she could enter the third year of the Ryerson social work degree program upon graduation, but would need three university courses to qualify. "For 14 weeks in my last semester, I went to school for 70 hours a week – taking three evening courses at Ryerson along with my full load and placement at George Brown. When people tell me it's not going to happen, I make it happen."

Currently, she is finishing a collaborative PhD in Sociology and Equity Studies and Women and Gender Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. She also works as a Graduate Assistant at OISE, helping Aboriginal graduate students gain an understanding of Aboriginal worldviews and creating a province-wide database of universities that offer programs and courses to Aboriginal graduate students.

In addition to her academic work, Lezard is a part-time faculty member in the Assaulted Women and Children's Advocate Counsellor Program at George Brown College and a sessional professor in the Faculty of Social Work at Ryerson University. She also works as a part-time HIV/AIDS educator for the Two-Spirited People of the First Nations, a non-profit social services organization whose membership consists of Aboriginal 2 Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Toronto.

Despite her heavy academic and work schedule, Lezard volunteers at least 10 hours each month with organizations that include Nellie's Shelter for Women and Children, the Coalition against Same Sex Abuse, Family Services of Toronto; Toronto Aboriginal Advisory Network; Voices of Positive Women; Toronto PRIDE; Toronto Aboriginal Strategy Roundtable; Toronto People with AIDS Foundation; Native Men's Residence; and Anduhyau Inc., an organization supporting Aboriginal women and children.

Throughout the years, Lezard has won many academic awards such as the 2004 Commitment to

Social Justice Award, Human Services Counsellor Program from George Brown College, the 2006 Leadership Award of Excellence for Off-Campus Community Contribution from Ryerson University and the 2008 Lillian McGregor Award of Excellence from University of Toronto just to name a few. Lezard is also an athlete and won a Gold medal in baseball at the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney, Australia, and in 2006, she won a Bronze medal at the Gay Games in Montreal.

Lezard continues to fulfill another lifelong desire – to help other Aboriginal people. Prior to her current work as an HIV/AIDS educator, she worked as a counsellor and cultural teacher for Aboriginal organizations in California and B.C. and her knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture, issues of violence and HIV/AIDS has made her a popular speaker and lecturer at a number of universities, workshops and conferences.

Percy Lezard was nominated by George Brown College for the 2008 Ontario Premier's Award for outstanding college graduates.



**TV CHEF MEETS SOON TO BE TV CHEF:** TV celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay recently dropped into George Brown's training restaurant The Chef's House – where he gave a televised cooking demonstration and met students including Victoria Michaud (left) who could soon be a nationally-known TV chef herself. She will be featured in a CBC documentary series on food on March 19. Soft-spoken and polite in person, Ramsay is internationally renowned for his explosive temper and foul tongue as star of TV shows Hell's Kitchen, Kitchen Nightmares and The F Word. Michaud, a second-year Culinary Management student, will appear in the 9 p.m. March 19 episode of the CBC mini-series called The Great Food Revolution, which explores the role food has played in our society over the last 20 years. The four-part series begins at 8 p.m. on March 19.

# President Anne Sado



Lifelong learning has always been a part of my professional life. My current educational pursuits include completing the

Institute of Corporate Directors Education program at Rotman School of Management, and partaking in a variety of annual conferences such as the President's Academy and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges conference.

Even before I landed my very first job, I had a strong desire to ensure education and development remained a constant throughout my career. When the opportunity to lead George Brown College presented itself – an institution dedicated to lifelong learning – I jumped at the opportunity, believing it would be an ideal environment for growth. This has turned out to be very true.

One of the best advantages of working for an organization that provides and promotes lifelong learning is that professional development is not only a necessary business function but a reflection of our core values. At George Brown we rely on our staff to deliver the finest quality of service excellence to our students and our community and to ensure teaching and learning is a hallmark of a GBC education... which creates the strongest reason to invest in relevant professional development.

The size of George Brown's expenditure on professional development places it at the higher end among the country's colleges, at 2.5 per cent of the annual salary budget. The coverage of this allocation includes tuition assistance, sabbaticals and the operation of Staff Development.

By looking at medium to large organizations across Canada, there is a clear correlation between investments in professional skill development and organizational performance. However, skills-based performance is far from the sole focus of GBC's Staff Development.

More important than focusing on any single skill area is fostering a strong sense of pride in what we do at the college. This is because the strength of a learning community – any community for that matter – relies on the engagement of its members. If our staff is engaged, we create a richer environment for working and learning, and this is the best outcome for us and our students.

Based on this focus, we have been implementing quality professional development based on our ongoing dialogue with staff, part of which took place recently in the employee survey. The breadth of development opportunities has continued to expand as a result of your input. GBC now boasts a tuition reimbursement amount that ranks in the top 10 of Canadian employers. We have several new or updated initiatives which have received positive feedback, including annual leadership retreats for admin, faculty and support staff, a faculty performance review process, and project management training.

Ultimately, lifelong learning is about remaining open to varying perspectives in order to discover new opportunities for growth. In much the same way, GBC's aim with staff development is to broaden people's views of their individual job roles in order to allow greater engagement with the College as a whole. Because as engagement grows, so too will our potential for learning and growth, both for ourselves and our students.

## GREEN SPOT

As part of its ongoing Green Plan commitments, George Brown is switching to fair trade coffee for all of its catering operations. By buying fair trade certified coffee, the College is helping coffee farmers to lift themselves out of poverty by investing in their farms and communities, protecting the environment, and developing the business skills necessary to compete in the global marketplace.

Eugene Harrigan, co-chair of the Green Team explains: "This is a good example of how greening purchasing practices can have far-reaching environmental and social benefits beyond our campuses."

In addition to ensuring that farmers are paid a fair price for their coffee and fair labour condition for farmworkers, growing fair trade coffee means that environmentally sustainable farming practices are used, prohibiting use of agricultural chemicals and promoting biodiversity through shade-grown, bird-friendly plantations. You can also go ahead and enjoy a cup of fair trade coffee at the Café in the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts.

## High school students get credits and a taste of college

Seventeen-year-old Josh Psavka may still be in high school but he has already proven he can pass – and pass muster – at college. This past fall the Grade 12 student at Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute took and passed a marketing course at George Brown that earned him a credit that he can use for both his high school diploma and a college diploma.

Every week Josh would leave his school near Danforth and Greenwood Ave. in east Toronto and trek down to the college's St. James Campus where he held his own with other students taking Principles of Marketing. His classmates had no idea he was getting his first taste of post-secondary education. "I looked forward to it every week," says Psavka. "I enjoyed the teacher, the environment, and the course work."

Psavka, who's aiming to study business at university, was impressed by the serious approach George Brown stu-

dents took to the class. "People were committed to learning. There weren't disruptions in class."

Psavka is one of a growing number of high school students who have enrolled in George Brown courses over the past year as part of a ministry-funded dual credit program that aims to encourage students to attend college or university. The program debuted in the winter 2007 semester with 30 students. This past fall there were 46 students, and this winter there are 77. The high school students are taking courses offered as part Technology, Health Sciences, Business and Community Services programs.

The dual credit course is a valuable addition to his high school education, says Psavka, providing a unique experience like a co-op term. His George Brown professor, Peter Burgess, agrees. "What a great program and opportunity. I wish I had such an opportunity 'back in the day.'"



George Brown News is a publication of the Marketing and Communications Department, George Brown College at 200 King St. East, Room 542E, Toronto, ON M5T 2T9  
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